

May 17, 2010

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) -- the Chairman of the House Small Business Committee's Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight -- held a Congressional hearing at the Ross Township Municipal Building today examining how to improve small businesses' access to capital. At the hearing, western Pennsylvania entrepreneurs and Eric Zarnikow, the U.S. Small Business Administration's Associate Administrator for Capital Access, testified about current credit conditions and proposed strategies for how to make capital more available to entrepreneurs.

“Numerous reports in recent weeks have indicated that our economy is regaining its strength: The number of jobs created in April was the highest it has been in four years, consumer spending is on the rise, and our manufacturing sector is expanding,” Congressman Altmire said. **“Despite these positive indicators, however, we still have a long way to go. Improving small businesses' access to capital is one of the most important steps we can take to bolster our nation's economic growth and create more jobs for Americans.”**

Congress has already taken some important steps to get credit flowing to small businesses. Since being enacted last February, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has helped to support \$26 billion in small business loans. In western Pennsylvania, SBA loan volume is on track to almost double this fiscal year over last year.

In their testimony today, three western Pennsylvania entrepreneurs laid out their vision for how the SBA could make their programs more effective. Karl Kaluhiokalani -- the President of RCC Consulting in Pittsburgh -- identified a number federal practices that he feels impedes small businesses' ability to compete, including the ways in which some procurement contracts are awarded. Chuck Leyh, President of Enterprise Bank in Allison Park, urged the SBA to establish a position in SBA district offices that could help local small businesses resolve disputes with the agency more quickly. Marilyn Landis of Basic Business Concepts Inc., located in Pittsburgh, urged Congress to increase maximum allowable SBA loan sizes, increase the percentage of federal research dollars awarded to small businesses, and strengthen protections for small businesses relying on credit cards.

